

JORDAN NEIGHBORHOOD CARE PROGRAM

**Results of Discussions with Neighborhood Residents
and Government Representatives**

CURA RESOURCE COLLECTION

**Center for Urban and Regional Affairs
University of Minnesota
330 Humphrey Center**

Prepared by:

William J. Craig

Pamela J. Schomaker

Center for Urban and Regional Affairs

University of Minnesota

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Introduction

The Community And Resource Exchange (CARE) project has been operating in the Jordan neighborhood since April, 1990. To date, the CARE project has been very successful in dealing with many problems in the Jordan Neighborhood. In particular, CARE has been successful in dealing with many crime and drug problems in the neighborhood. However, to ensure the continued success of the Jordan CARE program, the CARE committee asked the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) at the University of Minnesota to conduct discussions with both government personnel and neighborhood constituents.

The purpose of the discussions was to identify potential improvements in the current CARE program, and to discuss issues relating to future directions for the CARE program in Jordan. These discussions were held on February 5, 1992 (government representatives) and February 6, 1992 (neighborhood residents). Fourteen people attended the government discussion and 10 residents attended the neighborhood discussion.

Preliminary results of the discussions were presented at the February 11, 1992 CARE meeting, held at the Unity Center in Jordan. After presentation of the discussion information, attendees at the CARE meeting were asked if they had additional concerns or comments to add to the report. The suggestions offered at the CARE meeting also have been included in this report.

It should be noted that some of the suggestions mentioned during the discussions have been made previously and are still valid. Some suggestions, such as the neighborhood impact statements, have been tried with success, but have not been used as frequently as desirable.

The information gathered during the discussions with government representatives and community residents is summarized below.

Areas Where Improvement is Needed

The following issues were identified as areas in which CARE has not been successful:

- Lack of landlord participation in the CARE process for dealing with crime and drug problems that occur on landlords' properties.

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- Lack of participation in the CARE process by the following groups:
 - Renters
 - Members of ethnic minority groups
 - Some homeowners
- Inability to deal with "petty" issues such as nuisance noise or business people who cause problems by continually finding ways to circumvent the law.
- "Recycling" of criminals or other problem residents back into the community.

Suggestions for Solutions to Current Issues/Problems

A number of solutions to the above problems were offered by both government personnel and neighborhood residents:

Lack of landlord participation:

- Develop a better means for enabling residents to communicate concerns about problem properties to landlords (e.g., train residents to report to the landlord; encourage residents to "help protect property"). More cooperation between landlords and neighbors could be fostered by encouraging landlords to communicate more closely with people who live next door to a landlord's rental properties. The landlord could encourage these neighbors to contact him/her if problems arise at the rental property.
- Residents living near rental properties where problems are prevalent should be encouraged to persist in reporting problems and presenting complaints to CARE.
- Develop an educational program for landlords. Property management companies could provide information, such as how to screen tenants. Questions from landlords (e.g., Do I have to take the first applicant?) also could be addressed through this program.
- Develop or encourage the use of a tenant referral service designed to help identify "good" renters. A database of "problem renters" could be developed and shared among landlords in Jordan and other communities.

Lack of participation in the CARE process by specific groups:

- The neighborhood may wish to communicate with other CARE neighborhoods that have had success involving renters in the CARE program (e.g., Lyndale Neighborhood). This information may prove useful for developing strategies to increase renter participation in Jordan.
- To encourage more participation by residents from ethnic minority groups, Jordan residents may wish to consider holding CARE meetings at locations that are familiar to members of minority groups. Churches attended by minority groups were suggested as one possible location. Residents also noted that perhaps having more government representatives who are people of color involved in the CARE process would encourage more minority participation.
- Residents expressed a concern that people in the neighborhood lack information regarding what CARE involves and what CARE can do. A relatively small nucleus of people really know about CARE and appreciate it. Both government personnel and community residents still feel there is a need for more information to be distributed to people in the neighborhood. Residents also

suggest that JACC include more people on their mailing list used to identify who to notify about CARE meetings.

- Some homeowners may be reluctant to participate in CARE because they believe that nothing can be done to solve a problem, or they may fear retribution for reporting a problem neighbor. One possible solution to this problem is to provide more information to homeowners about what CARE is, how CARE works, and the successes that CARE has achieved. Neighborhood residents suggested making this part of a broader campaign to welcome and inform residents. As part of this, various information resources (e.g., information about trash pick-ups, home repair services) could be more easily available to residents. In addition, residents suggest that a "Jordan New Homeowners Information Packet" be developed to inform new residents about CARE and the neighborhood in general.
- To keep attendance and participation up, it was suggested that announcements distributed to residents notifying them of CARE meetings include more about CARE and the issues being addressed that evening, rather than just being a reminder that a CARE meeting is being held.
- Wider publicity needs to be given to CARE's successes. CARE stories also could be publicized in The Northsider. Another suggestion is to hold a "CARE Fair" in the neighborhood at which residents would receive information and could ask questions. Government representatives and other CARE representatives could set up information booths at the "Fair" and would be available to answer residents' questions. It also was suggested that having spaghetti dinners or holding block meetings or CARE meetings as "pot-luck" dinners is another way to encourage residents to attend functions at which they may learn more about CARE.

Dealing with "petty" issues such as nuisance noise (loud parties, noisy cars, etc.) and business people who are continually finding ways to stay one step ahead of the legal authorities (example mentioned: car repair shop that has been a problem):

- One possible means of addressing this problem may involve mediation between "trouble makers" and neighbors. The CARE committee may wish to work with JACC, other city resources, or CURA as a means to facilitate this mediation.
- Other possible solutions include: examining current nuisance laws to determine if legal means exist to deal with nuisance problems, enforcement of a youth curfew, enforcement of loitering laws, or encouraging neighbors to be more proactive in working together to report nuisance noise and other disturbances.

Recycling of criminals or other "problem" residents back into the neighborhood or to nearby neighborhoods:

- It was mentioned that "problem people" often move back and forth from one neighborhood to another. One means of dealing with this problem may be the use of "Neighborhood Impact Statements" which can lead to tougher sentences. This procedure has been used, but not as frequently as desirable. The Jordan community may also wish to consider working cooperatively with neighboring communities to ensure that "problem neighbors" do not simply move back and forth between communities. Perhaps CARE-type activities can be expanded to neighboring Hawthorne.

Issues Relating to the CARE Process

In general, both government personnel and Jordan residents who participated in the discussions are pleased with the CARE process (i.e., the procedures for handling problems and the logistical aspects of CARE meetings). In particular, people are satisfied with the frequency of CARE

committee meetings (every two weeks) and the time meetings are held (7:00 pm - 9:00 pm). CARE participants also expressed a sense of relief that CARE has not turned into a bureaucracy. However, the following suggestions were made regarding improvements in the CARE process:

- A number of comments and suggestions were offered regarding improvements in the block group meeting process:
 - Both residents and government representatives mentioned several benefits of having block groups meet on a regular basis. Because residents feel it sometimes takes too much time when "marshaling the forces" to quickly tackle a problem, residents suggest encouraging blocks to hold block meetings on a regular basis so they can react to a problem more quickly. They also feel this would enable block groups to be more proactive and perhaps less reliant on JACC or other government agencies. In addition, block groups could meet more frequently to discuss other issues besides problems which would foster a greater sense of community among residents.
 - Residents feel that once a block has achieved a successful resolution to one problem, it may be too long before another problem from their block will be brought to the CARE committee. In addition, several blocks may be working together on a particular problem. They may decide to work on a problem for one block first, but people feel it is too long before they get their next chance to present a problem. Therefore, it has been suggested that block groups should be free to meet when they choose to discuss problems in their block area. Following a block meeting, a block group would ask a JACC representative to meet with them to review what the block has considered and the proposed solutions.
 - JACC representatives mentioned that they do encourage blocks to meet on their own, and would consider developing a means for allowing blocks to bring problems to CARE from meetings not held through JACC.
 - Residents also suggest that JACC may wish to "deputize" people as a means to increase the number of people available to work with the blocks in dealing with problems (i.e., CARE "outreach" people).
 - Residents suggest inviting more blocks to each CARE meeting so that more problems are addressed at each session, particularly in the winter time.
 - Residents also suggest that there could be more active outreach effort by JACC (e.g., asking block groups what problems they are facing).
- Concern was expressed regarding the timeliness of notices about CARE meetings. It was suggested that notices be sent earlier to ensure that people learn about CARE meetings in time to make plans to attend.
- The suggestion was made that the ground rules and particularly the agenda should be presented at CARE meetings on a regular basis. The concern expressed is that this has not been done consistently and may be a source of confusion for some new attendees. It also was suggested that, on a monthly basis, a few minutes at the start of a CARE meeting could be used to briefly explain about the CARE process.
- Residents expressed the concern that newcomers to CARE meetings may feel left out or alienated because of the "cliques" of people who regularly attend CARE meetings. Therefore, residents suggest an effort be made to ensure that new people feel included and welcome at CARE meetings. It was suggested that serving refreshments at CARE meetings might facilitate increased attendance and more social interaction among people.

- It was noted that at some meeting locations the layout or space of the area may not be conducive to holding an effective meeting (e.g., seating arrangements are awkward or do not permit good eye contact or interaction among attendees).
- Continually changing meeting locations is another area of concern. While residents feel it is important to hold CARE meetings in a variety of locations to encourage more participation, they also feel this may be a barrier for some residents. This may be particularly true in the winter months since some residents may feel reluctant to venture into unfamiliar areas of the neighborhood after dark. Therefore, the suggestion was made that summer time may be the preferred time for holding CARE meetings in a variety of areas. As mentioned previously, this may be a means of encouraging greater participation by minorities. This also may make a statement to trouble-makers in those areas.
- A concern was expressed regarding identifying residents by name in the written CARE meeting minutes. It was suggested that, rather than mentioning people by name, problem properties be referred to by address or in other descriptive terms. In addition, there is concern that residents who report a problem property also may not wish to be identified by name in the minutes. For example, residents suggest that the minutes state that a particular problem was reported by "the block club representing 25th and Fremont."
- As CARE continues in Jordan and is initiated in other neighborhoods, increasing demands are being placed on government personnel. Therefore, it has been suggested that the number of government representatives attending each CARE meeting may need to be reduced. For example, some agencies, such as corrections, are not used regularly and it may not be necessary for someone from this department to be at every CARE meeting. However, although a particular government department is not represented at a meeting, if a problem is addressed that requires attention from that department, it should be made clear to residents that the information will be forwarded and the problem handled promptly. If this change were to occur, it would be essential that residents are informed of the change of process and are assured that problems will still be handled promptly and efficiently. This is an issue that should be discussed with Jordan residents to determine how they would feel about a reduction in attendance by government representatives.

New Issues/Problems for CARE to Address

A number of new CARE initiatives were mentioned by both government personnel and neighborhood residents. Because a large number of crime and drug problems are dealt with in the summer months, there is generally not enough time during summer meetings to address new initiatives for CARE. Therefore, CARE participants should consider using the winter meetings as a time for identifying and working on new initiatives. During each winter CARE meeting a specific new issue or initiative could be discussed. Having this type of activity as a standard part of winter CARE meetings also may encourage greater attendance at winter meetings. The following new issues were suggested by residents and government representatives:

- The "Resource House" should be developed as a place that residents could call or go to for information about CARE, or receive other information about how to handle a variety of problems that may be faced by residents, their family, or the neighborhood.
- A suggestion was made to develop a "CARE Directory" which would contain names, addresses, and telephone numbers of government officials and CARE meeting attendees. JACC

representatives mentioned that they do keep a list of people who attend CARE meetings and suggest that this list could be used as this type of resource.

- Development of a "CARE Handbook" also was suggested. This handbook would include information about the CARE process as well as information regarding who to get in touch with about various issues or problems.
- It has been suggested that part of the winter CARE meetings be devoted to further educate residents about how individual government personnel handle the problems identified by residents. In particular, since residents tend to have misperceptions about legal aid and welfare, government personnel may wish to further educate residents about these issues.
- Winter meetings also may be used for planning ahead and identifying future issues and concerns (e.g., new initiatives for CARE, developing a neighborhood marketing plan, planning for a tenant registry, addressing housing issues).
- Housing issues are an important area of concern, and a potential new initiative for CARE. Neighbors feel there is little that can be done to deal with the problem of abandoned houses or dilapidated properties. Government representatives offered the following suggestion: Neighbors could work together to purchase a problem property, with the final outcome being a refurbished house. This might entail the use of a community raffle to raise the funds needed to purchase a property. The winner of the raffle would be responsible for fixing up and selling the property. Ideas such as this could come from winter brainstorming sessions, and then be implemented as part of the CARE process.
- Use of a "Community Development Corporation" (CDC) is another possibility for addressing the issues of housing rehabilitation and improvement.
- Perhaps a CARE-type process would use a CDC, the Minneapolis Community Development Agency (MCDA), a property management company, community lenders, etc. as resource agents to work on housing issues. If this were implemented, an important lesson from CARE is to choose the first projects carefully to ensure early success with the program. This will serve as a basis for future success and will encourage residents to believe that housing problems can be successfully remediated.
- CARE should develop a means to deal with the problem of unsupervised children. This includes the problems of children being left alone at home and children being on the streets inappropriately dressed.
- Government personnel suggest recruiting a permanent advocate from each minority group in the neighborhood to assist them in dealing with issues and problems involving minority residents. The minority advocates would accompany government personnel when calling on minority residents.
- Residents suggest that community members may wish to volunteer as "neighborhood constables" who would report disturbances in their block area to the appropriate authorities.
- As a means of reducing problems created by youths in the neighborhood, it has been suggested that more recreational and job opportunities be provided for youths in the Jordan community.
- Because of past successes, residents are generally confident that government personnel will resolve problems quickly and efficiently through the CARE process. However, government representatives must maintain a delicate balance between taking too much control and doing too little. One key goal for government personnel should be the empowerment of neighborhood residents. In addition, government representatives must ensure that all problems handled by CARE are done so using official CARE procedures. This recommendation is not meant to rule out a government agency responding separately to the needs of an individual resident. Residents

expressed a desire to have the option of circumventing the CARE process in the event of an "emergency case," rather than waiting for the month that the CARE process will require.

- Residents of Jordan also should consider developing a long range plan for the neighborhood. This should involve taking an inventory of community assets (such as from data available through NRP or the state). This and other information can then be used in marketing the neighborhood to potential new homeowners.
- A complete and systematic evaluation of the Jordan neighborhood CARE project should be conducted. Included in this evaluation should be analyses of survey data collected at initial and subsequent block meetings. Surveys should be conducted of the groups which do not seem to be participating fully. The evaluation should include other CARE neighborhoods, both as separate evaluations for those areas and as comparisons with CARE in Jordan.

Conclusions

It is readily apparent that the CARE program in Jordan has been successful both as a means of solving problems in the neighborhood and as a model for other communities. The information outlined in this report represents ideas put forth by participants in the Jordan CARE process. Suggestions have been made by community residents and government representatives for some improvements in the CARE process; however, no major changes are suggested.

Two primary issues for CARE to focus on at this time are as follows: The winter CARE meetings should be used to reflect further on what CARE should be doing and to decide on new initiatives for the Jordan CARE program. It is recommended that the next major issue for Jordan to focus on is housing, and that this initiative be handled by a different group which has a CARE-like structure.

For CARE itself, one of the issues raised in this document should be addressed at each of the upcoming winter meetings. We suggest that the first of these be a discussion of how to speed up the process for a block club to bring its problems to CARE. Both JACC and the community have thought about this issue and are prepared to modify the procedure. New guidelines should be mandated, then tested.